THE EFFECT OF DIALECT ON EMPLOYABILITY

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF DIALECT
ON EMPLOYABILITY

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The purpose of this study was to determine if the applicants use of Appalachian dialect or standard North Carolina English would affect employment decisions made about the applicants and to measure the evaluative reactions of potential employers to standard North Carolina English and Appalachian dialect speakers by assessing their responses to speech characteristics of those speakers.

The literature related to this subject was reviewed and reported under two headings: 1) literature related to the description of Appalachian English; and 2) literature related to preferred speech characteristics.

Twenty bank managers, ten in Boone, North Carolina and ten in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, constituted the subjects for this study. Each employer listened to audio tape recordings of an Appalachian dialect speaker and a North Carolina standard English speaker answering identical interview questions. If there was a preference for employment each subject so stated. Each subject also completed a

checklist of bipolar characteristics for each speaker. The resulting data were subjected to the Chi Square test of independence and the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs test, respectively.

The Chi Square test was inappropriate because the frequency exhibited a similarity, all employers with a preference preferring the North Carolina standard English speaker for employability. Five of the ten sets of characteristics indicated in the Personality Index, did show a significant difference with the more positive characteristic consistently attributed to the North Carolina standard English speaker. On the basis of the data derived from this study, the author makes no generalizations other than preference for employability and positive speech characteristics strongly favored the North Carolina standard English speaker in this study, using this assessment instrument and these particular subjects.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the United States there are many varied dialects or regional varieties of English. Difference in language usage can be reflected in social status and group identification (Hubbell, 1979). Language variation in American English is something that all speakers notice and comment on when they interact with others from different regions, social groups and ethnic groups (Wolfram & Christian, 1976).

The geographical area of Appalachian is well known as one of linguistic divergence. The difference in the English spoken here and the other varieties of English is readily recognized by people from outside this area as they travel through the region or meet people who have lived there and use the dialect.

Studies of non-mainstream speaking communities do indicate a high correlation between the level of literacy and the use of socially stigmatized speech. Appalachia presents a low literacy level when compared to other areas of the United States. It is unfortunate that media presentations depicting the language and lifestyle in the Appalachian area offer poor imitations and stereotypes (Wolfram & Christian, 1976).

That dialect can draw negative reactions from listeners is noted by Lambert (1967). He states that dialect and speech cues may elicit some type of general personality, cultural or ethnic

stereotype. Gray & Wise (1960) state that the use of substandard dialect is characteristic of people in lower socioeconomic and educational levels. Miller (1975) found that dialects operate as identification cues and may affect listeners in ways other than simply speaker identification. A listener's evaluation of a speaker with a dialect reflects the stereotype that the listener holds of the particular ethnic or regional group to which the speaker belongs.

In most cases a speaker who uses a different dialect than his listener is perceived negatively (Anisfeld, Bogo, & Lambert, 1962). "Groups continuing to use substandard speech patterns face negative evaluative reactions" (Buck, 1968, p. 181). In every society there are people whose judgments about good and bad language affect decisions which in turn affect their reactions to other people, one such group being personnel managers in industry and business. Their personal vernacular is established as their norm for communication style, and they frequently choose to hire employees whose speech patterns are similar to their own. Standard English then refers to the language of people such as employers, who decide on the appropriateness of the speech of others (Wolfram & Fasold, 1974).

Harms (1961) suggests that individuals at higher employment and education levels are perceived as having more acceptable speech patterns. Speech style is an important indicator of various attributes of a speaker. Listeners draw conclusions about the type of person speaking from both content and style of speech (Cox & Cooper, 1981). "It is often not what an individual says but the

way he says it that influences how others react to him" (Matarazzo, 1965, p. 179).

This tendency to react positively or negatively to speech patterns has significance to the employment interview. Interviews are important communicative events. Almost all organizations require an interview as part of the selection process. The individuals involved in the interview each provide human elements such as motives, attitudes, beliefs and values. It is through evaluation of these human elements that hiring decisions are made by the interviewer (Einhorn, Bradley, Baird, 1982).

Speech characteristics and the reactions they trigger are important elements in predicting hiring decisions for white collar positions. These characteristics furnish cues which help solidify an employer's attitude toward the speaker and eventually influence hiring decisions (Hopper, 1977).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Because dialect operates as a cue to identification of a speaker, the listener often evaluates the speaker, reflecting on the stereotype a specific dialect may represent for him (Miller, 1975). The relationship between employers' attitudes and perceptions of specific speech characteristics, and the hiring decisions they make on the basis of those attitudes and perceptions is the focus of this research.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this investigation are two-fold:

1) To determine if a job applicant's use of Appalachian

dialect will affect employment decisions made about the applicant, and:

2) To measure the evaluative reactions of potential employers to North Carolina standard English and Appalachian dialect speakers by assessing their responses to speech characteristics of those speakers.

NULL HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses will be tested at a .05 level of significance:

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in the choice of employees (North Carolina standard English speaker versus Appalachian dialect speaker) made by the employers.

Ho 2: There are no speech attributes perceived as significantly different by an employer, whether the speaker uses North Carolina standard English or Appalachian dialect.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1) Dialect -- a language usage employed by a group of speakers who are separated from the larger community. A dialect may be characterized by nonstandard articulation, grammar, vocabulary, and rhythm or prosody (Shelton, 1979).

2) Appalachian English -- the social dialect of standard American English associated with the working class rural

population of the Appalachian region varying in grammatical features and phonological and lexical aspects (Wolfram & Christian, 1976).

3) Southern Mountain Dialect -- a generalized term referring to the Appalachian variety of the English Language (Dial, 1978).

4) Standard American English -- the real and accepted spoken language of the educated middle class (Wolfram & Fasold, 1974).

5) Non-standard English -- verbal expressions differing markedly from the accepted norms of this particular language (Nicolosi, Harryman & Kresheck, 1978).

LIMITATIONS

1) The subjects for this study will be limited to ten bank managers in the Boone, North Carolina area and ten bank managers in the Chapel Hill, North Carolina area who are responsible for hiring personnel.

2) Due to the paucity of information in the literature regarding hiring practices and non-standard English usage, this study will have few if any norms for comparison purposes.

3) Because only 20 potential employers will be involved in this study no generalizations can reasonably be made concerning attitudes toward employability of standard English speakers and dialect speakers.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A DESCRIPTION OF APPALACHIAN ENGLISH

The Appalachian Mountain region covers territory from Maine to Alabama. The area most commonly referred to as "Appalachia" is generally considered to encompass parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia and all of West Virginia. In the 18th century settlers moved westward from the Atlantic seaboard through the mountains and many of these remained in the mountains and established homes. Because of the rugged terrain of the mountain environment, these people were largely cut off from other settlements and other people. The early settlers were people of different nationalities -- Pennsylvania Dutch, German, English, Dutch and others from Europe constituted the heritage of many settlers. However, a large and influential group who settled in this mountain region known as Appalachia, were Scotch-Irish (Wolfram & Christian, 1976).

The beginning of Appalachian speech can be traced to the general historical period of the days of Queen Elizabeth I. The Appalachian dialect of today is a type of Scottish flavored Elizabethan English. The reason Appalachian people still speak as they do is because these early settlers remained virtually isolated from the mainstream of American life for many generations. The

hills and mountains inhibited travel and the old speech forms remained there that have long since ceased to exist elsewhere (Dial, 1978).

Appalachian English is designated to a region and there are differences within the region (Wolfram & Christian, 1976). Subjective reactions to language differences are inevitable. "Individuals respond to language patterns evaluatively based on their reactions to the social characteristics that various language forms may imply for them" (Ibid, p. 131). When individuals react subjectively to the speech of a particular group, they are expressing their attitudes toward the behavior of the group based on the manifestations of the language. The language of socially stigmatized groups is usually stigmatized. People tend to correlate linguistic differences with social and/or regional differences.

The social significance of various features of language are distinguished between socially prestigious and socially stigmatized features. A linguistic indication of social status is the use of socially prestigious features adopted by high status groups. Stigmatized features are associated with low status groups. Status groups are more often differentiated by the absence of socially stigmatized features than by the use of socially prestigious ones. Standard varieties of English can be defined by the relative absence of the socially stigmatized features used by non-mainstream groups.

The subjective reactions of various groups to the features of Appalachian English include social indicators, markers, and

stereotypes. Social indicators are related to social class but do not affect the listener's judgment of the social status of the speaker. Social markers show a social and stylistic difference and do affect the listener's judgment of the speaker's social status although it may be on an unconscious level. Social stereotyping occurs when specific linguistic features become a topic of social comment. There are a number of social stereotypes found in Appalachian English (Wolfram & Christian, 1976).

Appalachian English is distinctive because of the combination of linguistic features it exhibits. It is unique in phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and prosody. It is an ordered and systematic variety of English. The differences in Appalachian dialect are not deviations from standard English but the remnants of the dialects spoken by the original settlers in Appalachia (Adler, 1979). This language system is different from the middle class language system prevalent in most sections of the United States (Skinner, 1967).

Differences in phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and prosody follow. These are adapted from the research of Wolfram and Christian (1976), Brandes and Brewer (1977), Dial (1978), and Williams (1975).

PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES

Consonant Clusters

The simplification of final consonant clusters or blends is one of the features common in Appalachian dialect. This occurs when a stop consonant, such as /t/, /d/, /p/, or /k/, is deleted when it follows another consonant at the end of a word. Examples of this in blends include "tes" for "test," "han" for "hand," "des"

for "desk," and "was" for "wasp". In past tense verbs the -ed is often omitted as in "ram" for "rammed," "rub" for "rubbed," and "miss" for "missed."

In the case of final consonant clusters and plurals there are several different forms of pronunciation depending on the final segment of the base word. Plurals with the final /s/ are often pronounced as a final /z/. The plural -es is added to words ending in /sp/, /st/, or /sk/, resulting in "deskes," "ghostes," and "waspes" for "desks," "ghosts," and "wasps."

The /t/ sound is intrusive in a set of restricted words. These include "oncet," "twicet," "acrosst," for "once," "twice," "across," and "close." This particular feature is related to earlier forms of British English which include words such as "amongst," "amidst," and "against."

Copula and Auxiliary

The deletion of the present tense form of the copula is a feature of Appalachian English. Examples include: "they___afraid"; "you___crazy"; "we___just playin'."

The auxiliary deletion is also evident in some Appalachian dialect speakers. Examples include: "how long___you been up"?; "the biggest tree I___even seen." There is also evidence that deletions extend to modals such as "will" and "would."

R and L Deletion

"R-lessness" is closely connected to geographic region. In some cases deletion of /r/ is post-vocalic within the word. "Du'ing" for "during," and "ma'y" for "marry" are examples of this feature. Deletion of the /r/ is also post-consonantal such as

"th'ow" for "throw" and this feature is more common than the post-vocalic deletion.

"L-lessness" occurs most commonly in the post-vocalic position. "Woff" for "wolf," "hep" for "help," and "shef" for "shelf" are examples.

TH Sounds

The /f/ sound may be substituted for the /θ/ in medial and final positions in words. Examples include "mouf" for "mouth," "birfday" for "birthday," and "boof" for "booth." The /t/ sound is also substituted for /θ/ in specific words such as "mont" for "month" and "nuttin'" for "nothing."

Initial Segments

Unstressed initial syllable deletions are a common feature in Appalachian English. "Cause" for "because," "til" for "until," and "spect" for "expect" are examples. In Appalachian there is a range of unstressed initial syllables. These include a-, e-, un-, be-, re-, su-, po-, to-, and con-.

Initial /ð/, spelled th, can also be deleted in this dialect. "Em" for "them," "at" for "that," "'n" for "than," "'ere" for "there" are included in this feature.

Initial /w/ is also a deletion feature. "'Uz' for "was and "'un" for "one" are quite common in Appalachian English.

Sound Additions

This feature is exemplified by "hit" for "it" and "hain't" for "ain't" in pronouns and auxiliaries and appears frequently in Appalachian English. The vowel "a," pronounced with the schwa sound /ə/, is often a prefix for many verbs. Examples include

"afixin'," "awritin'," "asettin'," "agoin'," "afishin'," "alayin'," etc.

Features Involving Nasals

Consonants that precede nasals are often affected in Appalachian English. Examples include "wadn't" for "wasn't," "idn't" for "isn't," "doedn't" for "doesn't," and "sebm" for "seven."

The indefinite article "an" is pronounced as /ə/. Examples of this feature are "a apple," "a ear," and "a accident."

One of the most well-known features is the use of "-in'" for "-ing" in verb suffixes. Examples are "tryin'" for "trying," "fixin'" for "fixing," and so forth.

Other Consonantal Features

In Appalachian English, word final voiced stops, such as /d/, /g/, and /b/, may be pronounced with a sound similar to their voiceless counterparts /t/, /k/, and /p/. The glottal stop is used quite frequently when the final syllable of the word is unstressed as in "hundred," "salad," or "decided." This devoicing may also occur in single syllable words like "kid," "rag," and "cub" which will sound more like "kit," "rack," and "cup."

Sound reversals also occur in Appalachian English. Examples are "aks" for "ask," "ablum" for "album," "akres" for "acres," and "hunerd" for "hundred."

Vowel Characteristics

Single sound differences are listed below with examples of pronunciation.

/i/ or /I/ for /ɛ/ - deef for deaf, chir for chair

/i/ for /I/ - peench for pinch, deesh for dish

/I/ for /ɛ/ - iny for any, git for get

/i/ or /I/ for /ʌ/ - sich for such, sodee for soda

/ɛ/ for /I/ - spell for spill

/ɛ/ for /ʌ/ - hesh for hush, tetched for touched

/æ/ for /I/ - thank for think, ranch for rinse

/æ/ or /a/ for /ɛ/ - aig for egg, whar for where

/æ/ for /a/ - passel for parcel

/a/ for /ɜ/ - clark for clerk, sartin for certain

/a/ for /æ/ - gahruntee for guarantee, bar for bear

/a/ for /ɔ/ - arter for ought to

/ʌ/ for /I/ - whup for whip

/ʌ/ for /æ/ - ruther for rather

/ʌ/ for /ɜ/ - cuss for curse, futher for further

/ɜ/ for /a/ or /ɔ/ - fur for far

/ɜ/ for /ʌ/ or /a/ - bananer for banana, Cuber for Cuba

/U/ for /u/ - ruf for roof

/ʌ/ for /u/ - sut for suit

/ɔ/ for /æ/ - stomp for stamp

/u/ for /ʌ/ - cud for could

/u/ for /U/ - cooshion for cushion

Ire Sequences

In Appalachian English word with -ire such as "fire" and "tire" may be pronounced more like "fahr" and "tahr" respectively. Though this may sound similar to "far" and "tar," few native Appalachian English speakers would confuse these pronunciations. This process is more likely to occur in forms such as "tire" and

"fire" than in words such as "buyer" and "flyer" where the -ire sound is a suffix. The process affecting -ire sequences is fairly common among Appalachian English speakers.

Difference in Stress

Certain syllables in Appalachian English are stressed at the expense of other syllables. This is usually evident by giving words primary stress instead of the standard pronunciation. Examples are listed.

A-dress - address

KA-fe - cafe

SEE-gar - cigar

DAY-cember - December

DI-rectly - directly

DES-pised - despised

SPEE-dometer - speedometer

YOU-nitedstates - United States

GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

Verbs

A-verb-ing, as mentioned under Phonological Features -- Sound Additions, is also included under Grammatical Features. It is not only a sound addition but also a verb form in Appalachian English. Most researchers consider a- prefixing to be derived from prepositions, specifically "on." "He Kept abeggin'" for "He kept on begging" is an example, though a- prefixing has generalized too many verbs where "on" would not be applicable.

Appalachian English has a series of verbs in which the irregular has been retained whereas standard English has adopted a

regularized form. Examples of Appalachian English present and past verb forms are "climb-clumb," "fetch-fotch," "heat-het," "swell-swoll," "reach-retch," "sneak-snuk."

Regularized forms of the past tense have been adopted in Appalachian whereas in standard English an irregular form is preferred. Examples of Appalachian English present and past verb forms of this type are "blow-blowed," "cost-costed," "grow-growed," "see-seed," "heard-heared."

Another set of Appalachian verbs that preserve irregularity but in a different manner than the above mentioned present/past forms include "eat-et," "freeze-friz," "ride-rid," "set-sot," "take-tuck," "write-writ."

In instances of verbs where there are two acceptable (standard English) forms for past tense, Appalachians use both but appear to prefer the form with the vowel change. Examples are "awake-awaked, awoke," "crow-crowed, crew," "heave-heaved, hove," "shear-sheared, shore," "shrive-shrived, shrove."

The use of "done" with verbs is a feature that occurs in Appalachian English. Examples are "done forgot," "done give," "done gone."

Constructions that are commonly termed double modals are features in Appalachian English. "Might could," "might should," and "useta could" are examples of this feature.

There are specific verbs that are used with with a different meaning than the standard English forms. Examples are "learn," "take," "aim." Used in sentences there is a semantic difference.

She learnt me how to count.

I take weak spells.

I been aimin' to visit.

Adverbs

There are also differences observed in adverbial features of this dialect. "Liketa" and "supposeta" function as adverbs. An example of this usage is "It liketa scared me to death."

Adverbial phrases of time are often placed in the middle of a sentence instead of at the beginning or end as they are exhibited in standard English. An example of this feature is "We's all the time talking."

The adverb "ever" is moved out of the verb phrase in Appalachian English. "That's the biggest snake ever I seen," is an example of this feature. "Ever" is also combined with pronouns for constructing the words "everwhat," "everhow," and "everwho," which are used in Appalachian English. "Ever" is also used in contexts that would correspond to "every" in standard English: "Ever time I said it, he got mad."

The -er and -est suffixes are added to words that would use "more" and "most" in standard English. Examples of this feature are "worser," "awfulest," "beautifulest," and "baddest." "More" and "most" are also added to this form and a redundant formation occurs: "more older," "more closer," "most stupidest."

One of the most common intensifying adverbs in Appalachian English is the word "right." It is normally used with adjectives. Examples are "right cool," "right large," "right funny." "Right"

can also be used with adverbs: "hollared right loud," "hit right hard," "used right often."

"Plumb" is also considered an intensifying adverb. It most typically occurs with other adverbs and verbs such as "burnt plumb down," "blowed plumb off," "shot plumb through."

A number of adverbs and adjectives take the -ly suffix in standard English. This is deleted in some instances in Appalachian English. "Awful well," "terrible hard," "frightful scared," are examples of this feature.

The adverb "anymore" is used in negative sentences in Appalachian English. An example is "Why wasn't he there anymore"?

The use of "but" in negative sentences refers to an instance in Appalachian English. "He ain't but thirteen" and "he don't visit but oncet a month" are examples of this usage.

The use of "druther" for would is rather common: "I druther have a bicycle."

Negation

Multiple negation within a sentence is a feature of Appalachian English. Examples are "They don't have no work," "I didn't have nothin' to do," "I ain't going' no more."

The use of "ain't" or "hain't" (mentioned under Phonological Features-Sound Additions) is common in Appalachian: "I ain't been there."

Nominals

In some cases where -s or -es would be added for pluralization in standard English, it is deleted in Appalachian English,

specifically in nouns of weight and measure: ten pound_, four gallon_, nine hour_.

There is also a tendency to regularize irregular plural forms such as "snowmans," "foots," "squashes." Sometimes the -s is also added to the already plural form: "policemens," "peoples." The -es suffix is sometimes added instead of the -s: "deskes," "beastes," "ghostes."

Definite articles are often used with nouns for illness and disease: "you had the toothache," "I took the cold," "she had the stomachache."

In Appalachian English "self" may be added to all pronouns resulting in use of "hisself" and "theirself." Pronouns such as "me," "him," "her," "us," and "them" may be used in the beginning of sentences as subjects of sentences: "Me and my baby are leavin'," "Him and me want some more."

Demonstrative forms such as "them" and "this here" are used in sentences such as: "Them boys ain't goin'," "This here stuff is heavy."

Pronouns take on a final -n to make them possessive in Appalachian English: "yourn," "hisn," "hern," "ourn," "theirn." Plural "y'all" (for you all) is used in Appalachian English.

Pronoun deletion occurs in this dialect. Examples include: "I got some kin ___ lived up there," "Grandma's got this thing ___ tells me when to plant," "There was a snake ___ come down the road."

Pronouns may be added to sentences that would not be used in standard English: "I'll take me a pick and shovel," "He done had him a way figured," "I shot me a bird."

"They" is used in place of "there" in some instances: "If they's a lotta worms, we're lucky," "Are they stories about snakes"? "It" is also used in place of "there" in Appalachian English: "It's too much murder," "It was a fly in it."

Prepositions

One of the common patterns of prepositional usage in Appalachian English that differs from standard English is the use of "of" with times of day and seasons of the year: "Get up of a morning'," "You plant of a winter," "Play cards of a night."

Indirect Questions

In Appalachian English the rule for forming indirect questions follows the direct question rule, the auxiliary and question word is moved to the front of the clause and conjunctions "if" and "whether" are not used. Example: "Mama asked me where have I been," "I asked him could I come downstairs."

VOCABULARY

As civilizations change, languages must also change. The vocabulary of English and American people has changed over the past several hundred years, but in isolated areas, such as Appalachia, some older words have been retained that have been lost in more populated areas. The list below contains nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and miscellaneous Appalachian vocabulary words and phrases.

Nouns

Use of double first names:

Hubbard Lewis

Homer Wendell

Roy Noble

Joey Robert

Emma Alice

Katie Ruth

Ruby Ann

Eunice Pearl

beguns - big ones: "Those apples are beguns."

bunkum - bunk, junk: "That talk is a lot of bunkum."

evnin' - from noon until 6 p.m.: "She's supposeta visit this evnin'."

hate - nothing: "He didn't take a hate along."

hippoe - hypochondriac: "Uncle Jake is a hippoe."

passel - large amount: "They have a passel of kids."

poke - sack: "Whatcha got in the poke"?

sight - group: "The Crowders sure havea sight of visitors."

vittles - victuals, food: "Those vittles sure smell good."

whelk - whelp: "That bee sting left a whelk on my arm."

woman - wife: "My woman has dinner ready at six."

Adjectives

airish - chilly

biggety - self-important

blinked - soured

bounden - obliged

breaking or broken - losing good looks and/or health

clever - neighborly

dauncy - frail

feisty - putting on airs

fittin' - not good for much

ill - bad tempered

mincy - finicky

nary - not

nigh onto - almost

peaked - poor health

puny - sickly

reverend - strong, undiluted

right smart - considerable

ribley lookin' - seedy

several - numbering 20 to 100

stout - in good health

switchin' - from side-to-side

tetchy - sensitive

Verbs

aim - meaning

clabber up - cloud

div - dived

fall off - lose weight

feathered - fought

fly all over - verbally abuse

layin' off - putting off

lowed - expected

mizzling - drizzling

pack - carry

pickin' up - getting better

recommember - recall and remember

redd up - set in order

shed of - rid of

sparking - dating

tote - carry

traipse - running after

usin' - frequenting

wrench - rinsing and wringing

Adverbs

plumb - very

smackdab - directly

sorrowful - awfully

yonder - there

Miscellaneous

agin - against

against - before

anothern - another one

cain't dance - nothing to do

fornenst - next to

in the bed - sick for an indeterminate time

lessun - unless

haird, naren, arien - none at all

RHYTHM AND MELODY

The speech of the South Mountain people forms rhythmic patterns that include low intonation, leisurely pace, and concerning grammar and diction, a lack of self-consciousness. Their use of verb forms, subjunctives, specific English participles, old-fashioned prepositions, pleonasms, and heavy stress on certain syllables, produces metrical patterns similar to those found in nursery rhymes, riddles, ballads, and folk songs. The combinations of contractions, elisions, archaic tags, strange idioms, involved prepositional clusters, elaborate negative constructions, localisms, and a strictly observed unself-conscious grammar produce a poetic quality similar to folk epics of a quaint people.

Most of the characteristics of Appalachian English are not unique to this region only, but the cumulative effect of these characteristics will not be found in any other dialect to the extent that they are found in Appalachia. Not every Appalachian will use all of the characteristics of the dialect described here nor will they be used consistently. Some individuals vary their usage and employ standard English as well as Appalachian English, depending on the situation and/or environment in which the individual finds himself.

STUDIES OF PREFERRED SPEECH CHARACTERISTICS

Harms' (1961) study investigated listener judgments of speaker status and speaker credibility. Results indicated that high status speakers were consistently rated as most credible. The listeners

appeared to decide this from speech cues alone. Harms also found that a speaker may expect to be judged as more credible by sounding "educated." Low status speakers were found to be least credible. These listeners also distinguished high status speakers from middle and low status speakers on the basis of their speech. (Status of speakers was predetermined by amount of education and job prestige.)

English speaking subjects were used in Miller's (1975) study of English Canadian speakers and French Canadian speakers. The subjects agreed more with the communication attributed to the English Canadian speaker than when attributed to the French Canadian speaker. Reading communication was judged comparatively. The English Canadian sources were judged more competent and more trustworthy than the French Canadian sources. Miller found that dialect in this case did appear to highlight the relevant stereotype. The dialect speaker (French Canadian) was found to be less effective than the speaker with the same stereotype as the subjects. The dialect appears to have elicited a stronger stereotypic image than the alleged ethnic identity alone.

Larimer (1970) used bilingual speakers in his study of attitudes toward speaker status. The subjects were French Canadians and English Canadians. Six accents were used by the speakers: three French - Parisian, Quebec, and Acadian; three English - Oxford, Canadian, and Eastern United States. This study revealed that the Quebec accent was rated the lowest by all populations (including the Quebec French themselves). This result

appears to indicate that the populations used in this study have low expectations of the Quebec French. The Quebec French reflect a minority group status and listener reactions supported this.

Buck's (1968) study of dialectal variations of black and white speakers was conducted to determine the effect these variations have on the listeners' judgments of the taped speaker's competence, trustworthiness, and credibility. The results of this study indicated that subjects' attitudes were significantly more favorable toward standard speakers than toward dialect speakers. Standard English speakers, both black and white, were considered significantly more competent, trustworthy, and credible than were the dialect speakers. From this study, it appears that dialect phonetic variations do affect listeners' reactions to speech patterns and listeners' judgments of the speaker. This study also appears to support the conjecture that if a minority group member is attributed characteristics associated with the majority group, the majority group members tend to react to him/her antisterotypically.

Houck and Bower's (1969) study used northern and southern dialect speakers. One hundred twenty-eight college students at the University of Iowa were the subjects for testing speaker identification on the basis of group norms and goals. Analysis of variance indicated that the northern dialect was significantly more effective for both competence and trustworthiness features for a speech on student aid. That the subjects responded more favorably to the northern dialect for a topic irrelevant to region may be interpreted as an identification effect.

Williams (1970) found that sounding "disadvantaged" or "low class" was associated with perceiving a child as reticent or unsure. Sounding ethnic and nonstandard in language usage increased this negative perception. Twenty white children and twenty black children from Detroit, Michigan were the subjects for this study. Listeners were thirty-three primary grade teachers from inner-city Chicago schools. Using factor analysis, teachers' status ratings could be reliably predicated on the basis of selected features of speech and language in the childrens' speech samples. Both black and white teachers were similar in status judgments, reflecting association between higher status and linguistic effectiveness.

Miller and Hoppe's (1973) investigation of the effects of geographic regional similarity on communicator effectiveness revealed that on a topic relevant to regional norms, subjects responded much more favorably to a similar communicator than to a dissimilar communicator. No differences were found when the topic was irrelevant to regional norms.

The formal characteristics of speech are important determinants of how individuals present themselves in social roles (Sarbin, 1954). Such characteristics as pitch, rate, density, length, pauses, and silences are aspects of social speech to which listeners react. Changing these characteristics may affect the way speakers are received by their audience of peers and significant others (Matarazzo, Wiens, and Saslow, 1965). There appears to be a "responsibility scale" of language usage which places people within

a community according to their ability with language. Individuals select the more responsible person mainly from listening. In the same way, an employer wants an interview with a job seeker to help in the selection process (Joos, 1967). "Job interviewing is one specific situation in which disadvantaged groups perform poorly" (Gordon, 1980, p. 5810).

Experimental evidence indicates that success during job interviews depends more upon employment interview skills than on job related skills. An effective initial interview is at the top of the list of reasons to hire -- above previous work experience, high grade point averages, and strong recommendations. Many employers perceive selectively. This occurs when the employer forms an early impression of the applicant and then only observes qualities of the applicant that reinforce that initial impression. This process generally leads to selective retention. Often an employer's final assessment is predicated on biased and incomplete information (Einhorn, Bradley, & Baird, 1982). Interviewers are also more influenced by negative than positive information. If a shift in the employer's attitude occurs during the interview, it is more likely to be in an unfavorable direction. Employers have an image of the ideal candidate and focus on deviant characteristics. If negative impressions result during the interview, the possibility of rejection of the candidate will increase (Blakeney and MacNaughton, 1971).

In de la Zerda's (1978) study of Mexican-American speech and standard English speech in employment interview situations, results

supported the community stereotype of accented individuals. Standard English speakers were favored significantly for supervisory positions. Accented speakers were offered lowest level positions significantly more than the standard speakers. Social stratification appears to be maintained by speech variables. This regionally stigmatized dialect apparently triggered stereotypic attitudes of the perceived capabilities of the minority group.

The ramifications of speaking Black English in employment situations were studied by Terrell and Terrell (1983). The purpose of the study was to examine whether there was a relationship between the number of jobs offered and the type of speech used in the interviews. Using six black applicants, three speaking Black English and three speaking standard English, the women interviewed for jobs in person. It was found that applicants who spoke Black English were interviewed for shorter amounts of time and were offered fewer jobs than the applicants who spoke standard English. The jobs that were offered to Black English speakers paid significantly less than the jobs offered to standard English speakers. This study supports the concept that speakers of Black English are economically disadvantaged when compared to speakers of standard English. It is assumed that dialect is related to employment opportunities.

Hopper and Williams (1973) were concerned with the relationship between employers' attitudes toward speech samples and their hiring decisions. Subjects for this study were 40 employment interviewers in Austin, Texas, documented as employing more than 200

persons. Speech samples included standard English, Black English, Spanish accepted English, and southern white dialect. On the basis of factor analysis, significant differences for employability emerged only for the executive job category in which standard English was rated as most employable. Speech characteristics were lesser predictors for skilled and clerical categories and had no predictive value for manual labor categories. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that speech characteristics have a greater predictive value when the interviewee is applying for executive or supervisory positions.

Hopper's (1977) study included black and white bilingual speakers of dialect and standard English. Interview tapes were played for employers with application forms which included race. The research technique attempted to separate the effects of race and dialect and to examine the interaction of race and dialect. This study confirmed the importance of the employer's attitude toward speech in hiring decisions. Standard speakers were found to be more acceptable for openings than dialect speakers. Race/dialect interactions overshadowed the effect of either variable alone.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURE

SPEAKERS:

Two speakers were selected to make 3-minute tape recordings which would be presented to 20 bank managers in an attempt to evaluate employer reactions to standard English speakers and to dialect speakers.

The tape recorder used was a Realistic CTR-51, Model 14-813. The microphone used was a Realistic MC-1000.

One of the two speakers was a male Appalachian State University undergraduate student who has been categorized as a North Carolina speaker of standard English as defined earlier. He was audio tape recorded for approximately three minutes, responding to interview questions provided by the Appalachian State University Placement Office. The three questions were: 1) Describe your educational background; 2) How much independence and flexibility do you like in a job? 3) What do you see yourself doing in five years?

The second speaker was a male Appalachian State University undergraduate student who exhibited eight characteristics of Appalachian dialect as described in Chapter Two. These included: 1) consonant clusters; 2) initial segments; 3) features involving nasals; 4) other consonantal features-glottal stop;

5) 1-deletion; 6) vowel characteristics; 7) difference in stress; and 8) rhythm. He was audio tape recorded for approximately three minutes responding to the same interview questions as the North Carolina standard English speaker.

The selection of these two speakers to represent Appalachian dialect and North Carolina standard English was made with the advice and consent of Dr. Charles E. Porterfield and Mrs. Sharon S. Pennell, from the Appalachian State University Communication Arts Department, both of whom are highly knowledgeable and recognized in the area of dialect.

In order to minimize differences in language content which might affect employment judgments made by the subjects, the second speaker listened to the first speaker's responses to questions one and two, in order that his presentation, while not identical, would be quite similar. For the third question, the speakers were given identical responses to read from a script. Thus, for this last question, the subject listeners could respond only to speech differences without concern for semantic differences.

SUBJECTS:

The subjects for this study consisted of twenty bank managers. Ten were employed within a 20-mile radius of Boone, North Carolina; ten were employed with a 20-mile radius of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

As the tape recording of each speaker was played, the subject listeners selected those personality attributes and characteristics listed on the Personality Index (Appendix A) which constituted

their assessments. The bipolar characteristics were developed by Hopper and Williams (1973) and Hopper (1977), and each scale included a positive and negative personality characteristic from which a selection was made.

METHOD

Before the Personality Indices were provided or the tapes played, each subject was asked to assume that each speaker was a college graduate with minimal banking experience, equivalent academic achievement and acceptable similar physical attractiveness. Each speaker was to be considered for future employment within that particular branch, in a position involving personal contact with the public and other bank personnel. No reference was made to the term "dialect."

Recordings of the speakers were randomly presented. Each subject was asked to listen to both tapes and to complete the checklist for each speaker. At the completion of the recordings, each subject was asked if there was a preference between first and second speakers for employability. If there was a preference, each subject so stated and identified that choice.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data for preference for employability were analyzed using a Chi Square Test of independence to determine if there was a statistically significant difference at the .05 level of significance between the number of subjects preferring the speaker using North Carolina standard English and the number of subjects preferring the Appalachian dialect speaker.

The data for speech attributes was analyzed using the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference at the .05 level of significance for employers whether the speaker used North Carolina standard English or Appalachian dialect.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the number of subjects preferring the speaker using North Carolina standard English and the number of subjects preferring the Appalachian dialect speaker. Information relative to the characteristics attributed to speakers appear in Appendices B-E. These include frequency of characteristics attributed to each speaker by all employers, and the percentage of Boone and Chapel Hill employers attributing positive and negative characteristics to each speaker. The preference for employability appears in Tables 1 and 2. These include the number of employers and the percentage of preference for each speaker.

Table 1

PREFERENCE FOR EMPLOYABILITY BY ALL EMPLOYERS

Speaker Preferred	Absolute Frequency (# of Employers)	Relative Frequency (% of Preference)	Adjusted Frequency
Appalachian Dialect	0	0	0
N.C. Standard English	17	85	100
Neither	3	15	0

Table 2

PREFERENCE FOR EMPLOYABILITY OF NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD ENGLISH SPEAKER BY AREA

Area	Number of Employers	% of Preference
Boone, N.C.	9	90
Chapel Hill, N.C.	8	80

Analysis of Data

To test the null hypothesis 1, that there is no significant difference in the choice of employees (North Carolina Standard English speaker versus Appalachian dialect speaker) made by employers, a Chi Square Test was used. The null hypothesis can neither be accepted nor rejected because the frequency exhibits similarity, therefore Chi Square was inappropriate. As indicated in Table 1, all employers with a preference found the North Carolina standard English speaker to be more employable than the Appalachian dialect speaker. The similarity between Boone employers and Chapel Hill employers is indicated in Table 2 with 90 percent of Boone employers and 80 percent of Chapel Hill employers finding the North Carolina standard English speaker to be more employable. The preference for standard English speakers in executive job categories is supported in the literature.

To test null hypothesis 2, that there are no speech attributes perceived as significantly different by employers (whether the speaker uses North Carolina standard English or Appalachian dialect), the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test was used at

Table 3

EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BIPOLAR CHARACTERISTICS FOR SPEAKERS

Characteristics	Ties	+ for AD	+ for N.C. SE	Level of Significance
Eager/Reserved	9	1	10	.016*
Agreeable/Disagreeable	19	0	1	.317
Self-Assured/Timid	6	0	14	.001*
Relaxed/Tense	6	2	12	.019*
Expresses Self Well/Poorly	8	0	12	.002*
Warm/Cold	12	2	6	.208
Intelligent/Unintelligent	15	0	5	.043*
Concise/Repetitive	13	2	5	.310
Straightforward/Evasive	12	2	6	.208
Ambitious/Not Ambitious	12	1	7	.059

AD - Appalachian Dialect

N.C. SE - North Carolina standard English

*Indicates a significant difference

the .05 level of significance. Best (1977) indicated that if significance of the difference exceeds the .05 level, the researcher may conclude that chance fluctuations in the estimate will account for such a difference in as many as five out of 100 cases.

As indicated in Table 3, the Appalachian dialect and North Carolina standard English speakers are perceived as significantly different for five of the characteristics. These include eager/reserved, self-assured/timid, relaxed/tense, expresses self

well/expresses self poorly, and intelligent/unintelligent. Consistently the more positive characteristic was attributed to the North Carolina standard English speaker. Ambitious/not ambitious approaches significance at the .059 level. These levels of significance provide statistical data for rejection of the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis assumes that the direction and the magnitude of the difference is about the same. For the earlier mentioned characteristics these differences favor the North Carolina standard English speaker to a significant level. On the basis of the data derived from this study, null hypothesis 2 can be rejected.

Because of the limited number of subjects used in this study, we cannot make any generalizations concerning the attitudes of employers toward employability of North Carolina standard English speakers and Appalachian dialect speakers. For these particular subjects there was a significant difference in perceived speech attributes using this particular assessment instrument.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter Five provides a summary of the study and conclusions drawn from the data. Implications are made based on the statistical analyses of the data.

Summary

The purpose of this study was: 1) to determine if the applicants' use of Appalachian dialect or standard North Carolina English would affect employment decisions made about the applicants; and 2) to measure the evaluative reactions of potential employers to North Carolina standard English and Appalachian dialect speakers by assessing their responses to speech characteristics of those speakers.

The literature related to this subject was reviewed and reported under two headings: 1) literature related to the description of Appalachian english including phonological features, grammatical features, vocabulary, and rhythm and melody; and 2) literature related to preferred speech characteristics including studies of Mexican-American, Black English, French Canadian, northern, southern, and "high" and "low" status speakers.

Twenty bank managers in two geographic areas of North Carolina constituted the subjects of this study. Ten subjects were employed

in the Boone area and ten subjects were employed in the Chapel Hill area. Each subject listened to tape recordings of an Appalachian dialect speaker and a North Carolina standard English speaker answering identical interview questions. The subjects selected personality attributes and characteristics from the Personality Index (Appendix A) for each speaker. At the completion of the index, each subject was asked to identify his/her preference for employability of the speakers. The resulting data were subjected to the Chi Square test of independence and the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs test.

Conclusions

For this particular study using this particular instrument null hypothesis 1 can neither be accepted nor rejected because of the similarity in statistical frequency for employer preference. All employers exhibiting a preference for employability found the North Carolina standard English speaker to be more employable than the Appalachian dialect speaker.

For null hypothesis 2, results indicate a significant difference for five of the ten bipolar characteristics. Eager/reserved, self assured/timid, relaxed/tense, expresses self well/expresses self poorly, and intelligent/unintelligent are the characteristics perceived as significantly different for the speakers. The positive characteristic in each set was consistently attributed to the North Carolina standard English speaker.

The results of this study indicate that there are specific characteristics which appear to be associated with speakers of different dialects. For this particular study, all positive

characteristics were attributed to the North Carolina standard English speaker when a significant difference was evident. All employers stating a preference preferred the standard English speaker for employability, regardless of geographic area.

Implications

The literature suggests that employees who speak a nonstandard dialect will experience difficulties in the employment interview, particularly with respect to executive and supervisory positions. The North Carolina standard English speaker in this study was consistently preferred for the position described and consistently attributed the more positive personality characteristics. In this particular study it is evident that nonstandard dialect negatively affected the judgements of employers, including those employers in the same geographic area as the Appalachian dialect speaker. This study is consistent with other studies of nonstandard speech and employability. For individuals of nonstandard dialects who are pursuing executive and supervisory positions, the need to adopt standard English as a second language may be implied. Educators within colleges and universities that prepare students for this types of employment should make students aware of nonstandard dialect and its possible effect on employability.

Closing Remarks

A dialect is part of a person's culture. The many diverse cultures that collectively constitute these United States make us a most extraordinary population. The Appalachian dialect is unique and distinctive. The author is in no way denigrating Appalachian dialect or objecting to its use in any situation or environment.

This study does suggest that for specific employment purposes, standard English speakers may have an advantage over Appalachian dialect speakers. It is the author's wish that nonstandard dialect speakers be made aware of the possible negative reactions of employers, as this study has shown.

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APPENDIX A

Personality Index

APPENDIX A

Personality Index

Eager-----Reserved

Agreeable-----Disagreeable

Self-Assured-----Timid

Tense-----Relaxed

Expresses self well-----Expresses self poorly

Warm-----Cold

Unintelligent-----Intelligent

Concise-----Repetitive

Evasive-----Straightforward

Ambitious-----Not Ambitious

APPENDIX B

Frequency of Characteristics Attributed to

Appalachian Dialect Speaker

APPENDIX B

Frequency of Characteristics Attributed to

Appalachian Dialect Speaker

Characteristic	Number of Employers	Relative Frequency %
Reserved	15	75
Eager	5	25
Disagreeable	1	5
Agreeable	19	95
Timid	16	80
Self-Assured	4	20
Tense	15	75
Relaxed	5	25
Expresses self poorly	14	70
Expresses self well	6	30
Cold	7	35
Warm	13	65
Unintelligent	6	30
Intelligent	14	70
Repetitive	6	30
Concise	14	70
Evasive	8	40
Straightforward	12	60
Not Ambitious	8	40
Ambitious	12	60

APPENDIX C

Frequency of Characteristics Attributed to North Carolina Standard English Speaker

APPENDIX C

Frequency of Characteristics Attributed to

North Carolina Standard English Speaker

Characteristic	Number of Employers	Relative Frequency %
Reserved	6	30
Eager	14	70
Disagreeable	0	0
Agreeable	20	100
Timid	2	10
Self-Assured	18	90
Tense	5	25
Relaxed	15	75
Expresses self poorly	2	10
Expresses self well	18	90
Cold	3	15
Warm	17	85
Unintelligent	1	5
Intelligent	19	95
Repetitive	3	15
Concise	17	85
Evasive	4	20
Straightforward	16	80
Not Ambitious	2	10
Ambitious	18	90

APPENDIX D

Percentage of Employers Attributing Positive Characteristics to Speakers

APPENDIX D

Percentage of Employers Attributing Positive Characteristics to Speakers

Appalachian Dialect Speaker

	Eager	Agreeable	Self-Assured	Relaxed	Expresses Self Well	Warm	Intelligent	Concise	Straight-forward	Ambitious
Boone Employer	20	100	10	30	40	80	90	80	50	70
Chapel Hill Employer	30	90	30	30	20	50	50	60	70	50

North Carolina Standard English Speaker

	Eager	Agreeable	Self-Assured	Relaxed	Expresses Self Well	Warm	Intelligent	Concise	Straight-forward	Ambitious
Boone Employer	70	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	90	90
Chapel Hill Employer	70	100	80	50	80	70	90	70	70	90

APPENDIX E

Percentage of Employers Attributing Negative Characteristics to Speakers

APPENDIX E

Percentage of Employers Attributing Negative Characteristics to Speakers

Appalachian Dialect Speaker

	Reserved	Disagree-able	Timid	Tense	Expresses Self Poorly	Cold	Unintel-ligent	Repet-itive	Evasive	Not Am-bitious
Boone Employer	80	0	90	80	60	20	10	20	50	30
Chapel Hill Employer	70	10	70	70	80	50	50	40	30	50

North Carolina Standard English Speaker

	Reserved	Disagree-able	Timid	Tense	Expresses Self Poorly	Cold	Unintel-ligent	Repet-itive	Evasive	Not Am-bitious
Boone Employer	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Chapel Hill Employer	30	0	20	50	20	30	10	30	30	10

VITA

Rebecca Riggsbee was born in Durham, North Carolina, on May 1, 1952. She attended public schools in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School System and graduated from Chapel Hill High School in June, 1970. She attended East Carolina University during the 1970-1971 school year and then transferred to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in the Fall of 1971. In May, 1974 she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene. She accepted a position in the family dentistry practice of William H. Salling, D.D.S. in Durham, North Carolina, and worked in this practice until August 1981. At that time she began study toward a Master's Degree in Speech Pathology at Appalachian State University. This degree was awarded in May, 1984.

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